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THE
RESULTS

OF THE

Protestant Reformation.

A Lecture

DELIVERED IN ST. ANN'S CHURCH

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 8, 1878,

BY THE ✓

VERY REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON, V.G.

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LECTURE.



IN the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the thirty-third verse are these words: "For God is not the God of dissension, but of peace, as I also teach in all the churches of the saints."

It is an axiom that he who wills the cause wills also the effect, and it is understood in all our intelligent actions that we are responsible for the direct and legitimate results of our actions. Mankind adopt this rule universally, and therefore against its truth there can be no objection. The object of this lecture this evening is, then, to bring into light the results of that Reformation of which I spoke to you on Sunday evening last, and by these results to judge the Reformation itself. According to the words of our Lord, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." In the last lecture we considered the nature of the Reformation itself, and the character of the principal Reformers. That Reformation was

demonstrated to be not simply a Reformation but a destruction. In truth, it was the creation of a new religion, and a presentation to the world of a new Christianity; and we found that, if we argued logically and were true to ourselves, we must admit either that the ancient religion, known to the world for so many centuries, was false, and the Reformation, with its doctrines, was true; or that the Reformation was false and the ancient religion was true. Between these two points there can be no medium, and the proposition itself is self-evident to any reasoning mind. But these men who brought forth the Reformation, and who, therefore, were the pioneers of a new religion, and the instruments, according to their own sayings, of God in this great and important work, not only brought no signs whereby they could authenticate their divine mission; but, on the contrary, they themselves denied the necessity of such signs. They even went so far as to assail the possibility of miracles or of prophecy. It had been understood in ages before that God should authenticate His revelation by miracles, which are a proof of divine intervention; and so had God in divers ways taught mankind, verifying the Jewish theocracy by most wonderful miracles, and bringing into the world His Incarnate Son and the New Law by the display of the most wondrous powers of His hand. But the

Reformers, possessing in themselves no power whatever to work miracles, made no pretence to confirm their mission as divine. On the contrary, they assailed miracles themselves and attacked the miracles of the Church, and even went so far as to argue against the possibility of a miracle being well and truly proved. It came to this, that they soon rejected every miracle save only those which were recorded in the pages of Holy Scripture. Among their followers at the present moment there are few who believe in miracles at all. Then in regard to prophecy, which has always been the gift of those who claimed to be teachers of God, the Reformers did not pretend to be prophets, or if they made predictions, their predictions certainly failed. I remember at this moment no prediction of the Reformers save one, whereby, over and over again, they foretold the destruction of Antichrist, that is to say, of the Holy See. Luther himself more than once declared that he should see the end of the Roman Church, and that during his life the last of the popes was reigning. You know very well how true that prediction has been, which, though he uttered it first, has been re-echoed by his children many times since. We saw, also, in our former lecture that, while there was no pretence of miracles or of prophecy, there was also no pretence nor profession of extraordinary holiness

of life. On the contrary, the Reformers were immoral men, who could not by their lives be the personal guides of any one in the path of virtue, as we justly argued, using even the very words of Luther. Could God, who is a God of infinite holiness and purity, employ such guides as these to lead men in the paths of a new religion?

To-night, however, we argue directly from the results of their work, and not from the work itself, nor from the Reformers themselves. These results we shall endeavor to show, as briefly as we may in this short lecture, were destructive, *in the first place*, of morality; *in the second place*, of society and the whole social order; *in the third place*, of the Christian Church; and *in the fourth place*, of the Christian creed and of faith itself. And surely, when we have demonstrated these results, which we will endeavor to prove by the very confessions of the Reformers and their followers, we shall have made good our thesis and have shown that such results cannot come from God, and that He could neither will the effect nor will the cause. Under the influence of the Reformation everything that was sacred to man, dear to the family, dear to society, or to the Christian Church went down beneath the power of this religious movement.

I.

In the first division of this lecture this evening I shall endeavor to prove to you that the results of the Reformation were destructive of morality ; and here I shall speak of the theory and of the practice of the Reformers. Theory is the cause of practice, and therefore it is evident that from a corrupt theory corrupt conduct will flow. In theory the Reformers denied the possibility, and, therefore, certainly the necessity, of good works. It was not possible for men, according to their doctrines, to perform any works which were really good or acceptable to God. They declared that man was so depraved by his fall that he had lost his free-will ; that he had lost the power to do anything except to look to God ; that even when the grace of Christ came back to him and God came to lead him, he was so fallen that corruption hung over him for ever and tainted everything that he did. When, therefore, good works were not possible and not necessary, you will at once see that the theory leads to evil works, and inasmuch as, according to the faith of the Reformers, all works were evil, there could be no greater or more constant fountain of evil than this doctrine itself. All the works of man, according to their theory, before justification were damnable sins ; and all the works of

man after justification were so sinful in the sight of God that, if He were to judge them strictly, every one would be damned. Such a theory was constantly uttered and constantly held by all the leading Reformers. What, then, was that justification of which they spoke? Was it anything real? No; it was something entirely unreal. It was justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and not by the communication of His justice. Man was held to be just when he was not just. Over and over again they asserted that man could not be just, and as he could not be just, then how could he be justified? Why, the righteousness of Christ, all-sufficient, was made to cover him like a cloak, and, imperfect and unholy, he was considered just, not for anything that God made him, not for regeneration, or transformation, or sanctification, but for the righteousness of Christ, who in Himself was infinitely holy. I do not know any more immoral theory than this. I do not know any theory which leads more directly to carelessness of life; a theory which, after all, is the groundwork of the Reformation. Luther said over and over again that this justification by faith only is the practical test of a standing or a falling church, by which he meant that that church only was true or in union with God which held this theory of justification by imputation of the

justice of Christ, and by faith only. Then, in order to make justification possible, naturally came the Calvinistic theory in regard to predestination; for how should men be justified? how were men to be held acceptable to Almighty God? There was no reason in themselves why they should be so accounted. They did not work good works; they could not; they had no free-will; they were machines; and therefore, in order that they might be justified, they must be justified by an arbitrary selection. So came the theory of predestination, not contingent at all upon man's exercise of his free-will or his good works, but antecedent and independent of all his conduct; and so came that horrid theory of the predestination of a certain portion of mankind to everlasting damnation, and the predestination of a certain portion to everlasting salvation, without any regard to their merits or their works. It even went so far as to predestine infants to everlasting damnation. Some were justified by this arbitrary decree of God, and some were left behind in the depravity of their original sin. You heard, dear brethren, the statements of Luther and his followers in regard to free-will, which I read you on Sunday evening last. You remember that he declared that free-will was entirely lost; that, to use the words of Zwingli, there was no free-will in man whatever in relation to the things

of God ; and that, therefore, as Luther says, “ man is like a horse,” and either God or the devil rides him.

It matters not who rides him, he must obey ; he has no choice ; he must go according to the bridle and the spur. As God pushes him, then he does something not by free-will but by the power of God. And when the devil pushes him, then he does something not through free-will but by the power of the devil who takes possession of him. When the devil takes possession of some man or leaves him, it is only by that arbitrary will by which God wills that a certain number shall be damned and a certain number shall be saved. Then the conclusion is simply this : that those who are to be saved are to be saved without any regard to their good works, and that they *will* be saved ; that there is nothing in heaven or earth that can keep them from being saved. Why, then, should they undertake to do anything themselves ? It matters not to them ; they will be saved anyway, whatever they do. And as for those unfortunate ones who are left behind and are to be damned, how idle for them to kick against the arbitrary decree of God ! They must perish anyway, and as they must perish, they ought to say to themselves, according to the language of the epicure : “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” While

there were those of the Reformers who did not go all lengths in the belief of this absolute predestination, there were none who did not accept the doctrine of the extinction or paralyzation of free-will, and none who believed in good works, who admitted that good works were necessary for salvation.

I leave you, dear brethren, to your own conclusions in regard to the moral effect of doctrines like these, doctrines which were new and unheard of, which were the parent, as you shall see, of every species of unbridled lewdness and immorality. Then the Reformers laughed and jeered at the idea of the works of supererogation, or the counsels of perfection, at the vows by which monks and nuns consecrated themselves to the service of God. They declared it to be an idle thing, fondly invented, that man or woman should separate himself or herself from the world and be consecrated to the service of the living God. And all following our Lord in the way of self-abnegation, in the way of self-denial, in the way of crucifixion of self and of the flesh with all its unholy desires, they completely and totally denied, and not only denied but even derided. There is not, rest assured, in what I say to you the slightest exaggeration ; for such was, and such is at this very moment, the doctrine of the Reformers and their followers.

I prefer to read to you from some of their authorities this statement of their doctrine, that you may see that I have only candidly brought it out in open light :

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD (1576-1580).

“We reject and condemn the following phrases, where it is taught : That good works are necessary to salvation ; that no one has ever been saved without good works ; that it is impossible to be saved without good works.”

The Westminster Confession, 1647, teaches “that the elect will certainly persevere to the end and be eternally saved, and that this perseverance depends not upon their free-will but upon the immutability of the decree of election.”

The Westminster Catechism declares that “every one sins daily in thought, word, and deed,” and that “every sin deserveth God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.” It also declares that all the works of the unregenerate are sinful, and this doctrine, with that of election, is contained in the articles of the Church of England. Thus, before justification, all we do has the nature of sin ; and, after justification, every one sins daily, and all his sins deserve eternal damnation.

And the salvation of the elect does not depend at

all upon their conduct. So it is true, as Zwingli said, that it matters not if a justified person commits murder or adultery a thousand times a day, he will certainly be saved (Alzog, III. 329).

So much for the Protestant Reformers in regard to good works and justification. So much for the morality contained in their doctrine. But there is no doctrine held in simple theory; it is the fountain of practice and of the life. What, then, was the practice of the Reformers and their disciples? How did their doctrine flow out into their lives? What was the result in their conduct, and that almost immediately, of such doctrines as those which I have read to you? I hardly need take time to tell you that where the master fails the servant will fail; that where those who are called the ministers of God give evil example and fall into vice, those to whom they preach will follow their pernicious example. When, therefore, we behold at the time of the Reformation that, almost without exception, every priest who joined the Reform movement, and who had consecrated himself to God by vows of chastity, immediately married or did worse, what will you expect from this example? When nuns, in the modesty of their sex even, could not be kept from breaking their sacred vows the moment they espoused these doctrines, what can you expect in the conduct of those

who never had taken upon themselves such obligations? We saw in our former lecture that even polygamy was recommended and permitted; that the Landgrave of Hesse, by the edict of the principal Reformers, was allowed to marry a second wife while another was living, and that one of the Reformers, in the presence of the others, performed the ceremony. We have seen that Luther himself declared that he could not find polygamy against the Scriptures, nor could he forbid a man, if he so wished, from taking more than one wife at once. The doctrine of the Anabaptists was concubinage, or polygamy, together with a communism in goods. And these fanatics were the genuine children of the Reformation. The doctrines of the Reformers in regard to marriage and divorce became very loose. Marriage, according to the law of God, is a sacred ordinance which can be broken only by God himself. "Whom God hath joined together let no man dare to put asunder." But the Protestant doctrines, wherever they have prevailed, in almost every state, give to the civil power the right to divorce; and it became a common thing for men to divorce themselves and marry again, and for women to do likewise. Divorce is only the first step towards polygamy. Whoever diminishes the sacredness of marriage, or takes from the holiness of that tie, which lies at the foundation of the

family and of all our social institutions, is the enemy of God and of man. I wish to read you now the testimony of the Reformers themselves in regard to the immorality which followed almost directly upon the preaching of their doctrines :

“On November 10, 1541, Luther writes to one of his friends that ‘he had almost abandoned all hope for Germany, so universally had avarice, usury, tyranny, disunion, and the whole host of untruth, wickedness, and treachery, as well as disregard of the word of God and the most unheard-of ingratitude, taken possession of the nobility, the courts, the towns, and the villages.’ In the March of the following year he writes in much the same strain, adding that ‘his only hope is in the near approach of the last day ; the world has become so barbarous, so tired of the word of God, and entertains so thorough a disgust for it.’ On the 23d of July he declares that ‘those who would be followers of the Gospel draw down God’s wrath by their avarice, their rapine, their plunder of the churches ; while the people listen to instructions, prayers, and entreaties, but continue, nevertheless, to heap sin upon sin.’ On another occasion (October 25, 1542) he declares that ‘he is tired of living in this hideous Sodom’ ; that ‘all the good which he had hoped to effect has vanished away ; that there re-

mains naught but a deluge of sin and unholiness, and nothing is left for him but to pray for his discharge.' 'Alas!' he cried to the Prince of Anhalt, 'we live in Babylon and Sodom. Everything is growing worse each day.' And even in the very last hours of his life, so bitterly did he feel the immorality and irreligiousness of the city which he had made the chosen seat and centre of his doctrines, that he had actually made up his mind to leave it for ever.

"Few of the Reformers dealt less in extremes than 'the mild Melancthon.' What, therefore, are we to think of the state of things which drew even from him the declaration that 'in these latter times the world has taken to itself a boundless license; that very many are so unbridled as to *throw off every bond of discipline, though at the same time they pretend that they have faith*, that they invoke God with true fervor of heart, and that they are lively and elect members of the Church; living, meanwhile, in truly Cyclopean indifference and barbarism, and in slavish subjection to the devil, who drives them to adulteries, murders, and other atrocious crimes' ? This class, too, he tells us, are firmly wedded to their own opinions and entirely intolerant of remonstrance. 'Men receive with avidity the inflammatory harangues which exaggerate liberty and give

loose rein to the passions ; as, for example, the cynical rather than Christian principle which denies the necessity of good works. Posterity will stand amazed that a generation should have ever existed in which these ravings have been received with applause.' 'Never in the days of our fathers,' he avows, 'had there existed such gluttony as exists now and is daily on the increase.' 'The morals of the people, all that they do, and all that they neglect to do, are becoming every day worse. Gluttony, debauchery, licentiousness, wantonness are gaining the upper hand more and more among the people, and, in one word, every one does just as he pleases.'

"'Most of the preachers,' writes Bucer, 'imagine that if they inveigh stoutly against the anti-Christians [papists], and chatter away on a few unimportant, fruitless questions, and then assail their brethren also, they have discharged their duty admirably. Meanwhile, there is nowhere to be seen modesty, charity, zeal, or ardor for God's glory ; and, in consequence of our conduct, God's holy name is everywhere subjected to horrible blasphemies.' 'Nobody,' writes Althamer, in the preface of his Catechism, 'cares to instruct his child, his servant, his maid, or any of his dependents, in the word of God or His fear ; and thus *our young generation is the very worst that ever has existed.* The

elders are worthless, and the young follow their example.'

"‘The children,’ says Culmann, ‘are habituated to debauchery by their parents, and thus comes an endless train of diseases, seductions, tumults, murders, robberies, and thefts, which unhappily, owing to the state of society, are committed with security. And the worst of all is, that they are not ashamed to palliate their conduct by the examples of Noah, Lot, David, and others.’

"‘To add further testimonies,” says a writer in the *Dublin Review*, “would be but to weary and disgust the reader. We can say with truth that to cull even these few from this mass of painful and revolting records has been anything but an agreeable task; and that the reader who will be content to pursue the general inquiry further for himself, to read through the evidence of Amsdorf, Spalatin, Bugenhagen, Gerbel, Major, Flacius Illyricus, Brentius, Schnepf, Wesshuss, Camerarius, and the numberless others whom the industry of Dr. Döllinger has accumulated, must make up his mind to encounter many shocking and disheartening details, for which the popular representations of the social and religious conditions of the great era of the Reformation will have but ill prepared him.

"It must not be supposed that the testimonies

which we have hitherto alleged, or the great mass of those collected by the above-mentioned author, describe the social condition but of a portion of Germany under the Reformation. There is not a single locality which has not its witness. Saxony, Hesse, Nassau, Thorn, Brandenburg, Strassburg, Nurnberg, Stralsund, Mecklenburg, Westphalia, Pomerania, Friesland, Denmark, Sweden; and all, or almost all, are represented by natives, or, at least, residents, familiar with the true state of society, and, if not directly interested in concealing, certainly not liable to the suspicion of any disposition to exaggerate, its shortcomings or its crimes.

“Indeed, the connection between the progress of Lutheranism and this corruption of public morals, could not possibly be put more strikingly than in the words of John Belz, a minister of Allerstadt, in Thuringia (1566): ‘If you would find a multitude of brutal, coarse, godless people, among whom every species of sin is every day in full career, go into a city where the Holy Gospel is taught, and where the best preachers are to be met, and there you will be sure to find them in abundance. To be pious and upright (for which God praises Job) is nowadays held, if not to be a sin, at least a downright folly; and from many pulpits it is

proclaimed that good works are not only unnecessary but hurtful to the soul.' '' *

There are many other testimonies which time will not permit me to read. Any one who may be desirous of investigating these matters for himself may be referred to the work of Dr. Döllinger on the Reformation, and Dr. Döllinger is one, I suppose, particularly acceptable to Protestants at this time, since in his late days he has abjured the faith of the Church. We have, nevertheless, his testimony to the Reformation, and all the statements he has made stand unproved and unanswered.

Time only prevents me from multiplying these testimonies, and yet every one I have cited is taken from the admissions of the Reformers themselves. History tells us how, immediately upon the spread of the Reformation in Europe, there came an immorality and a lewdness such as the world had not known since pagan days.

II.

My second proposition is that the results of the Reformation were destructive of society. The social order is from God; He is the founder of the social fabric. In these days it is common to think that

* *Dublin Review*, 1843.

men themselves are the sources of the power of government, and the framers of the social order; but there is no infidelity more dangerous to the peace of nations. The social order depends entirely upon God, who has given to it His authority, and, therefore, any movement which should take away its sacredness is destructive of the best interests of mankind. The Reformers attacked society directly by extinguishing the religious element, and by destroying the Church as the arbiter of right and wrong to the nations. When the Church was removed there was no teacher to instruct mankind, no pacificator to stand between nation and nation, or between the governor and the governed. The relation of the ruler to the subject came also to be misunderstood, and the true nature of government denied. Two extremes were immediately seen, and became the immediate consequences of this movement; and one extreme is destructive of the other: such is the inconsistency of error. The one extreme, taught by many of the Reformers, held that kings ruled by divine power, that they were autocrats, and therefore could do as they willed, even in things spiritual as in things temporal. This opinion they held that they might gain the favor of the princes, that by them they might build up their cause. Again, when revolutions were kindled, and they could excite the

populace, and by that means spread their doctrines, they taught that revolution was right. No matter what might be the conduct of the governor, many held that the majority had the right to rebel and to destroy the legitimate relation between the ruler and his subjects. You may ask how it was possible for doctrines so inconsistent to be held by the same minds, but if you ever analyze error you will find that error is always full of contradiction. The true state, therefore, of society, which realizes that the governor when exercising his just powers is the representative of God ("By Me kings reign and princes decree justice"), was altogether ignored and denied. It was denied by the extreme which held to the divine and absolute right of kings; it was denied by the other extreme, which held to the absolute right of revolution; and, while one doctrine paralyzed the other, the preaching of both these doctrines led to continual confusion and to the demoralization of society. Revolutions were fomented for the very purpose of spreading the reformed doctrines. Princes were flattered whenever they were the aids of the reform movement. Thus says a historian from whom we have already quoted:

"With the help of the princes Luther and his followers had abolished the sacred privileges of the hierarchy. To the princes they surrendered,

sometimes peaceably and sometimes compelled by force, the supreme spiritual authority; and having done so, they made them their masters and set up the institution of *Cæsaropapacy*. This secular supremacy in spiritual affairs was thenceforth unlimited in its claims and more arrogant in its assumptions than the Byzantine despotism of the Lower Empire. The princes became at once the defenders of the Reformed Church against its foes, and in some sort the conservators of unity against its own members, whose interminable dissensions and schisms were constantly threatening it with dissolution. It is, however, somewhat amusing to learn that the Conventicle of Naumburg (1554), presided over by Melancthon, adduced the Scriptural texts, 'Lift up your gates, O ye princes' (Psalm xxiii. 7) and 'They shall be thy nursing fathers' (Isaias xlix. 23), as arguments going to prove the necessity of making the Church dependent upon princes. This is only another instance of the saying that anything may be proved by the Bible.

"With these precedents before him Stephani had no difficulty in demonstrating, of course by the authority of the Bible, the existence of that peculiar *episcopal* system which was taken for granted in the peace of Augsburg, and according to which the jurisdiction of bishops was transferred to the sove-

reigns of the countries in which they severally resided. It was claimed that the ecclesiastical supremacy, being essential to the maintenance of public peace, belonged of right to the civil ruler, and that he, therefore, became by *virtue of his office as sovereign* the head of the Church in the country over which he ruled." *

The undue extension of the powers of sovereigns led to the opposite extreme, and the right of revolution. Revolutions and wars were the consequence in every country where the reformed doctrines flourished.

"Might makes right" became the recognized law. "Beza and Melancthon advocated the execution of heretics on general principles, and the latter agreed with Luther in authorizing the *murder of tyrants*. Civil war, an obliteration of the principles of patriotism, and the introduction of foreigners to settle domestic difficulties, were everywhere the consequence of the Reformation. Thus Englishmen were invited to France and Scotland, Frenchmen to Germany, Dutchmen to England, Englishmen to Holland, Russians to Poland, and Turks to Hungary." †

"That the Reformation was brought about by political power," says Jurieu, an inveterate enemy of the Catholic Church, "is incontestable. Thus in

* Alzog, III. 303, 304.

† Ibid. 301.

Geneva it was the Senate ; in other parts of Switzerland, the Grand Council of each canton ; in Holland, the States-General ; in Denmark, Sweden, England, and Scotland, kings and parliaments that introduced it. Nor was the supreme power of the state content with guaranteeing full liberty to the partisans of the Reformation ; it also took from *papists* their churches and forbade them to exercise their religion in public."

"In Silesia," says Adolphus Menzel, "the new Church was mainly established by the favor and protection of princes and magistrates. Nearly all the people were loyal to the ancient faith, and had not the most remote thought of making any change in their religion. The Polish peasants, like those of German descent, embraced the religion that had been introduced by the nobles. In Sweden, Gustavus Vasa professed the new teachings because he desired to bring to the support of his throne the wealth and power that had been taken from the clergy. In England the divorce of Henry VIII. was the occasion of the Reformation."

Says Frederick the Great in his Memoirs : "If the causes which promoted the spread of the Reformation be reduced to their last analysis, they will be found to be as follows : In Germany it was *interest* ; in England, *lust* ; and in France a *love of novelty*."

Dr. Alzog remarks: "Of all the princes who were so enthusiastic for the Reformation there was not a single one distinguished for honesty of purpose or purity of morals. We have only to compare the impure and bloodthirsty Henry VIII., the sensual Philip of Hesse, the unbelieving and frivolous Albert of Prussia, the despotic Christian II. of Denmark, and the equally despotic Gustavus Vasa of Sweden, with contemporary Catholic princes like George, Duke of Saxony; Joachim, Elector of Brandenburg; the Emperors Maximilian, Charles V., Ferdinand I. and Ferdinand II., the Dukes of Bavaria, Albert and Maximilian I., and we shall see how incomparably more noble, more pure, and more elevated were the lives of the latter than those of the former." *

Thus the religious element was altogether obliterated from society, and society was divorced from God. This is the legitimate result of the Reformation; and wherever you have seen that movement flourish you have seen this result. And now the consequence of these doctrines has become almost universal, so that at this moment there is hardly a Christian country in existence—I mean a country which recognizes Christ as the Lord over all and the principles of the New Law, the religion which Christ introduced into the world, as the principles which

* Alzog, III. 296, 297.

should govern men and nations. The theory that religion has nothing to do with society; that the Church must altogether be deprived of influence over the state; that men in social matters are free to act even irrespectively of the divine law, is the consequence of this divorce which we see now all around us, and which has produced its baneful fruit. If society is nominally Christian, and if, owing to the teachings of the Catholic Church and the principles of morality imbibed in childhood by many who are not Catholics, some of the grand truths of our religion are still holding influence over men, it is because they hold them in spite of that religious movement which gave birth to the Protestant Reformation. When the family falls society falls with it. For society, when the Church is gone, there is no teacher of divine truth authorized by God. The family falls when the sacredness of marriage is not recognized, and divorce and concubinage are permitted. And now we have not only an attack all along the line of the social fabric against Christ and Christianity, but we have an attack against the existence of God. The infidels of our day have altogether forgotten Christ. He has gone by, and their attack is now against God and His being. "God," said an eminent statesman in Italy not long ago—"God is no longer a factor in society. We do not know in society and in cabinets

whether there be a God or not; and if there be a God, it is not of Him that we shall take notice in our movements." The infidels of our day are seeking to extinguish the Divine Providence and to govern men by the principles of pure humanitarianism or materialism, thus denying not only Christ, who bought us with a price, but denying also God, who created us, and who by His almighty power holds us out of nothing. Such principles, while they are the legitimate results of the teachings of the Reformers, are against the nature of God. They have destroyed the fair fabric of Christian society, and they threaten all that is dear to man; they not only threaten Christ, but they threaten the throne of God Himself.

III.

The third division of my lecture leads me to speak of the results of the Protestant Reformation as destructive of the Christian Church. The stand taken by the Reformers was that the Church had erred in faith. And if the Church had erred in faith, then there never had been a Church, or if there had been a Church, it had not been the Church of Christ. I would I could make this plain point evident to every one. Behold the contradictions in terms that are to be found in the assertion of the error of the Church

of Christ ! The Church of Christ, if it be the Church of Christ, cannot err in matters of faith, for the moment that it errs it is the Church of the devil. What can there be more plain than this ? That is not the Church of Christ which teaches error ; but if the Church of Christ can teach error, then, according to the assumption, it is the Church of Christ and it is not the Church of Christ at one and the same moment. It is the Church of Christ because, according to the assumption of the moment, it is so called ; it is not the Church of Christ because it teaches falsehood, and cannot, therefore, be the agent of God in any sense. The very idea of a church having erred in faith destroys it root and branch, and leaves nothing whatever behind it. Again, this theory is open to another contradiction. If the Church erred, then Christ broke His word, for He declared that it should not err, and He said to Peter, on whom He built His Church : “The gates of hell shall never prevail against my Church,” and “I will guide it into all truth.” Now, if the Church erred, the gates of hell *did* prevail against the Church, and Christ broke His word. But you are to have a new Church, and Christ is to be its author. But Christ has broken His word, according to the assumption of the Reformers, and therefore is not worthy of confidence. Then how can you trust Him again ? And yet you are to believe,

in one and the same mental act, that He broke His word and is not worthy of confidence, and that He is worthy of confidence, and accept a new Christianity at His hands. I do not know how a logical mind can fail to see the utter inconsistency of such theories as these. But whatever may be said, it is evident that the idea of the error of the Church in matters of faith is suicidal to the Church itself. "The Church of God," says St. Paul, "is the pillar and ground of the truth." It holds up the truth to the nations, and on it the truth rests. Now break it down, and where is the pillar and ground of the truth? So when you teach the error of the Church—as it was taught by all the Reformers (for how otherwise could they vindicate their own Reformation or their attempts to reform its doctrine)—you destroy the Church, and when it passes away from the minds of men you have obliterated the great bulwark of truth and piety.

Such was the *theory* of the Reformers in regard to the Christian Church, and I need not dwell further upon this point, so evident and so universally admitted. In *practice* they withdrew from the communion of the Catholic Church to set up their own churches, and gave themselves the right to construct organizations which they declared to be human, which they asserted were not divine, to which they gave no

power which belongs legitimately to a church, no power of teaching and no power of discipline, save that which came from the members. They allowed no power of teaching, for the churches they set up were confessedly fallible, and a fallible teacher is no teacher at all. They believed in no power of discipline except that which came from the members, for their organizations were governed by the majority or by a chosen council. Therefore, by their own admission, there was no authority from above, but all came from beneath, and the Church was a purely human invention. Then as regards the divine ministry, there was no ministry appointed by God. The power to appoint ministers in the congregations came from kings and princes, or communities could select ministers for themselves; and this was the doctrine, without exception, of every reformed country and every reformed church. Even in the Church of England, as we shall see in our lecture of Sunday evening next, the ministers so appointed were recognized to be validly constituted by the designation of the princes or by the selection of the people.

Luther himself, well instructed in the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church, consecrated Amsdorf a bishop, though he himself was only a priest. "We have," said he, "consecrated a bishop without

chrism—nay, more, without butter, or lard, or suet, or tar, or grease, or incense, or coals.”

Thus did he ridicule in his coarse and vulgar language the rites of Catholic ordination which had come down from the apostolic age. So the unity of the Church was broken, and the ministry of Christ ceased among them.

Luther at first invested every layman with sacerdotal character, and taught that all the people were priests to God, and this doctrine still exists among many of the Reformed churches. Then consistories, composed of laymen and ecclesiastics, were created to govern the churches they established. The Scriptural appellation of bishop was changed into that of superintendent. In the Church of England alone was the episcopacy preserved, and there—as we shall see on Sunday evening next—it was only the form, for the chain of apostolic descent was broken. Even in England, with the form of episcopacy preserved, there was no pretence that the ministry of the Reformed churches on the Continent was not valid nor blessed by God. On the contrary, there was constant intercommunion between the ministers of the Church of England and the ministers of the Reformed churches, and the Reformers were the framers and makers of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. If I need detain you further to

prove that the Reformation has destroyed the Christian Church ; if I need do more than bring forth the theory which destroyed it fundamentally, and the fact of the formation of churches which professedly were only human organizations, I might appeal to the divisions of Christendom around you on every side, and ask you if you can believe in your heart that such divisions were the fruit of the long-suffering and patience of our Redeemer, or if you can believe in your honest mind that our Lord ever intended to permit His divine Church, which He called His bride and spouse, and likened to the seamless robe that He wore, to be broken into fragments ?

Lastly, I need not argue to prove that which all Protestants admit ; that in their view the Church of Christ is not necessary to the salvation of any one. It is their fundamental doctrine that the church, though it may be for devotion or for counsel and mutual encouragement, is not a necessity in the plans of God, and that, therefore, whatever the church may be, it has nothing necessarily to do with the work of our sanctification. If the Church of Christ have nothing to do with the work of our sanctification, surely it is destroyed and its office is obliterated from the minds of men. Those who are born and educated under such principles have no correct idea of a church, nor of its nature. They have not the slightest concep-

tion that it is a sacrament of unity between Christ and the soul; they have not the slightest conception that in the church they are to understand and know, in its fulness and beauty, the manifold wisdom of God.

“For them” [the Reformers], says an historian already quoted, “a visible, infallible, and sanctifying Church, established by God and anterior to the Holy Scriptures, had no longer any meaning. They rejected her authority and denied even her existence as a visible organization. In her place they substituted an *invisible* church, whose members, scattered over the face of the earth, were united in fellowship by hidden and spiritual bonds.” *

IV.

I come now to the fourth and last division of this evening's lecture, and shall endeavor to show you in very few words that which is almost self-evident—that the principles of the Reformation were destructive of the Christian creed and of faith. First we will consider the theory and secondly the fact. In theory private judgment destroys both the creed and the possibility of faith. I do not err when I say that private judgment is the cardinal principle of

* Alzog, III. 298.

Protestantism. The right to judge for one's self in matters of faith, or the right of every individual to interpret the Scripture, is the very point on which all Protestants unite; and therefore my statement will not be denied by any one. But this principle of private judgment destroys entirely the possibility of a creed. There can be no creed where each individual is the maker of his own faith. There can be no unity of faith where all matters of belief are referred to the individual judgment. One man is as good as another in finding out his faith and in interpretation of Scripture, or tradition, or history; and more than that, this private judgment is not simply his privilege but it is his duty. Can I, as one man, bind myself to the opinion of another man, when there is no divine authority and no divine witness? What right have I to place my eternal salvation upon the *ipse dixit* of another man? All are bound, even the ignorant and unlettered, to decide for themselves, and thus you have as many creeds as there are individuals. Such, I honestly believe, is the exact state of things among those who have followed the principles of the Reformation.

Then, private judgment destroys the possibility of faith; for where there is no external authority there can be no exercise of faith, for, be it remembered, faith is the belief in that which God delivers to man.

Now, if God does not speak to me, I cannot exercise faith; and, surely, I am not vain enough to say that my own judgment is to me a divine testimony. What I can prove on my own judgment is my opinion, and my opinion stands for what it is worth. But as for the voice of God, men must hear it from an external and an infallible authority before they can believe; for to believe is not to entertain an opinion, nor to know some truth by induction or logic, nor to search it out by science; but it is to believe it and receive it because God declares it to be so, and because, as the Sovereign Truth, He neither can deceive nor be deceived. On the private-judgment theory there is no possibility of an external testimony. If it be objected in answer to this that the Bible is the religion of Protestantism, and that the Holy Scriptures stand outside as an external and an infallible authority, I answer, first of all, the Holy Scriptures, when they are submitted to the judgment of each individual, are not an authority which leads to unity of faith. I need only bring before you the testimony of facts to prove this, but reason alone asserts it. A page speaks not for itself. I am a living man; if I speak to you, you hear my words, and I speak for myself. A page speaks not; it is that which every one makes it to be; it takes the color of each one's education or opinions. Beside all this (and here is

the great insignificance or invalidity of the whole theory of Protestants), they have no power to prove the Holy Scriptures to be the word of God. There is no external authority for them, and there must be such an authority to prove the divine character of the Holy Scriptures. You cannot in logic prove the Scriptures by themselves. Certainly you cannot prove the Holy Scriptures by the fact that to you or to this man or to that man they seem to be inspired, for that is a kind of esoteric and subjective interpretation from which you may depart if you choose, and by which you can bind no one but yourself, much less the conscience of your neighbor. Therefore, without an external and infallible authority to declare that the Bible is the word of God, that it is inspired by Him, you have no means whatever to prove the Holy Scriptures to be the word of God. And Protestants who believe in the Holy Scriptures—and I thank God that many of them do—believe in them either on the authority of the Catholic Church or on no authority at all ; for since there is no body on the face of the earth that pretends to be infallible but the Catholic Church, without her there is no witness to the revelation or redemption of Christ.

Now, as to the *fact* that the results of the Reformation have been destructive of the unity of the Christian creed and of the possibility of faith,

I need only ask you to look with honest eyes at the condition of Christendom since the Reformation. Before that day there was one faith. I do not say that there were not heretics and schismatics ; but I say that in the compactness of one faith all who called themselves Christians united. Now, I challenge any man to find, beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, a semblance of unity even in matters that might be called fundamental. And who has the right to declare which are fundamental and which are not fundamental articles ? Surely on every side are the variations of Protestantism. They have contradicted themselves over and over again ; pulpit stands against pulpit, and individual against individual, and church against church, and even in the same church there is not unity of faith. I do not believe that there is a single Protestant church in the whole world where the members of one single congregation are united together in the unity of one certain faith. So, if facts are anything, they stand around us with their thousand tongues, and they proclaim the utter confusion which has resulted from the destruction of "the pillar and ground of the truth." Even the Bible, called "the religion of Protestants," has suffered at their hands ; it has been torn into pieces ; it has been misinterpreted, and some of its portions

have been declared uninspired. Some are received and some are not received, and at this day in many churches there are large portions acknowledged to belong to the Sacred Record which are treated according to the spirit of the first father of the Reformation, Luther. He called the epistle of St. James an epistle of straw, and he expressed the wish that it could be erased from the canon of Holy Writ. You will not wonder that upon every side there are those who deny the inspiration of Holy Scripture, who deny that it is the word of God at all. Even Protestants moral in their lives and upright in their conduct, who profess after a certain fashion to believe in Christ, feel themselves free to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Yet it was once thought that private interpretation of the Scriptures was the fundamental point in the whole Protestant movement! Allow me to read to you for one moment the testimony of the Reformers themselves.

The wavering but often candid Melancthon wept bitterly over the dissensions of early Protestantism. "The Elbe," said he, "with all its waves could not furnish tears enough to weep over the miseries of the distracted Reformation." *

"It is really painful to read the lamentations of

* Epist. lib. ii. Ep. 202.

the Protestant writers of those days over the utter and inextricable confusion in which every doctrinal subject had been involved by the disputes and contentions of the rival religions. 'So great,' writes the learned Christopher Fischer, superintendent of Smalkald, 'are the corruptions, falsifications, and scandalous contentions, which, like a fearful deluge, overspread the land, and afflict, disturb, mislead, and perplex poor, simple, common men not deeply read in Scripture, that one is completely bewildered as to what side is right and to which he should give his adhesion.'

"Bartholomew Meyer, professor of theology at Marburg, declares that the 'last times,' predicted by the Lord and His apostles, have arrived, and that 'not only in morals, but also in the doctrine of the Church, there is such confusion that it may be doubted whether there is a believer on earth.' An equally unimpeachable witness of the same period admits that 'so great, on the part of most people, is the contempt of religion, the neglect of piety, and the trampling down of virtue, that they would seem not to be Christians, nothing but downright savage barbarians.' Flacius Illyricus declares that 'the falsification of the doctrine of penance and justification had led to complete epicureanism.' " *

* *Dublin Review*, 1848.

I could easily multiply testimony if there were time to do so, and yet I feel very certain that it is not necessary to an audience like this. Those who desire to do so can follow out the testimony of the Reformers themselves. Let them not read the falsifications of history which have been studiously circulated for many years, but let them go back to the fountain-head, to the histories of the time which treat of the early days of the Reformation, and study the writings of the Reformers themselves.

For my conclusion to this brief lecture I have only two remarks to make, and I make them in all sincerity and in truth, as God is my witness, not with the desire of wounding the feelings, or opinions, or the prejudice of any one. God forbid that I should ever wish to do so. I make them simply because truth is truth, and because to speak the truth is the greatest charity to mankind and to the souls of our neighbors. My first remark is that the Protestant Reformation, and the whole system evolved by it, contains in itself the germs of infidelity; that it leads to infidelity just as surely as premises lead to their conclusions, and that logical minds who take up the principles of the Reformation will of necessity become infidels. Such minds have to choose—as they must choose now, and as they have had to choose every day—be-

tween infidelity and the Catholic Church. There is no middle-ground on which to stand ; it is either rationalism or faith, and if it be faith, it is the Catholic Church. That religious movement which leads to the destruction of morality, to the destruction of society, to the destruction of the Christian Church, to the destruction of the faith and the unity of the Christian creed, is the source of infidelity so broad that there are no human tongues that can describe nor human minds that can measure its limits.

In the result of this Reformation we have come now to an infidelity so strong and so broad that there has been no day in all the history of the world when it has been so completely unmasked. The Catholic Church stands as in her first Pentecostal days, not confronting the line of dogmatic battle, but standing in face of the pagan, and declaring the unity of God and the perfection of His incomprehensible nature. The Vatican Council, which speaks the word of Christ, so necessary to our own age and needs, begins again with the annunciation : "I believe in God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

My closing remark is this : that God is not the author of this confusion. He is the author of peace and not dissension ; He cannot contradict

Himself, for He is unity unchangeable and truth everlasting, and therefore He is not the author of the dissensions of our day, nor of the variations which have flowed directly from the Protestant Reformation. They, therefore, who would know Him, who would learn what God is in all His beauty and His truth, must know Him in the face of His Incarnate Son; they must know Him at the altars of His Church. There alone can they find Him, see His beauty as He is, and be ravished with the revelations of His exceeding love. They must lay aside that infidelity and rationalism which is the scourge of our day, and turn to God and be true to themselves and true to reason, for reason and faith go hand in hand.

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OF THE
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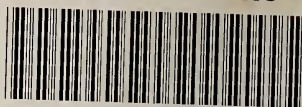
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